



INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTE OF MODERN LETTERS

Te Pūtahi Tuhi Auaha o te Ao

Newsletter – 20 July 2011

ISSN: 1178-9441

This is the 171st in a series of occasional newsletters from the Victoria University centre of the International Institute of Modern Letters. For more information about any of the items, please email modernletters.

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1. National Poetry Day

There's an exhausting time in store for poetry lovers. At the IIML we started our week with the Best New Zealand Poems reading on Monday – a lunchtime event at Te Papa that 150 people turned out for. The ten poets read their own work from [BNZP 2010](#), but also some interesting favourites from other poets. Geoff Cochrane even recited an early David Mitchell by heart. This was the second in our annual Writers on Mondays presentations. Next week, Dinah Hawken, Pat White and Bernadette Hall will be at the Te Papa marae. You can check the full programme [here](#).

But Friday is the big day, and even for those of us with big Wellington appetites there's far more than we can eat laid out on the table. Do we head out to Upper Hutt

on Friday evening to hear Bill Manhire? Or drop in to Unity Books for Airini Beautrais, Jenny Bornholdt and Dinah Hawken? Or should we fill the tank with petrol and head to Palmerston North for an evening with Brian Turner?

Booksellers NZ, whose web presence has become very lively this year, has a full listing of [events nationwide](#).

2. Liberate Your Words!

One announcement we will definitely be making on National Poetry Day is the name of the 2011 winner of the [National Schools Poetry Award](#). The winning poem – chosen by outgoing Poet Laureate Cilla McQueen – is going to be pretty visible this year. On Sunday 24th July, a full-colour poster of it will be slapped up around the country by the fine folk at Phantom Billstickers, while the equally fine and entrepreneurial folk at [Neogine](#) will be posting an animated version on the web, along with the texts of all ten of the shortlisted poems. In August, those ten poets get a free trip to Wellington, accommodation at the wonderfully generous [Bolton Hotel](#), and a whole-day poetry workshop with Bernadette Hall, Jenny Bornholdt and James Brown. Watch this space.

3. The Iconic Anderson

Congratulations to our very good friend Barbara Anderson, who has just been made an [Arts Foundation Icon](#). The Icon Awards are restricted to a living circle of 20. Barbara joins other literary Icons Margaret Mahy, Patricia Grace and Maurice Gee, and succeeds – if that is the word – Janet Frame and Hone Tuwhare.

Barbara Anderson is one of those local writers who are admired outside New Zealand to an extent we aren't always aware of back at home. Hence the UK newspaper, [The Telegraph](#), on June 19th, singling her out in the context of New Zealand's recently announced Guest of Honour status at the Frankfurt Book Fair:

'Your starter for 10: name an author from New Zealand. Well done if Katherine Mansfield, Janet Frame or Ngaio Marsh sprang to mind. After that the going gets tough, which is probably why the country has been named "Guest of Honour" at next year's Frankfurt Book Fair. Keri Hulme's *The Bone People*, which inexplicably won the Booker Prize in 1985, set back the cause of Antipodean fiction for years. The fact that Ms Hulme is mentioned in the press release and Barbara Anderson is not is a crying shame. Ms Anderson is a truly great writer and all her novels are worth reading.'

Quite why the Brits are so darkly obsessed with Keri Hulme and *The Bone People*, we don't really know, but we applaud their support of Barbara Anderson's novels – though we would want to add her extraordinary short stories to the list of required reading.

4. Situations Vacant

Fancy a year writing at the IIML? One where we make encouraging noises in the corridor and pay you to write? Yes? Then you should know that applications for the [2012 Writer in Residence](#) position close on 30th September. If successful, you would be the 34th Writer in Residence at Victoria. [Robert Cross's photographs](#) of past writers are on our website.

5. Late night listening

We bumped into the writer Jack Lasenby at Unity Books (Wellington) last week. He pointed at a big pile of [The Best of Best New Zealand Poems](#) and said: 'I had a sleepless night last night.' The point was, he had turned the radio on and heard a repeat of Kim Hill interviewing Damien Wilkins. 'Did you hear it?' asked Jack. 'He read this magnificent poem by Bob Orr! What a wonderful thing – those parents after a day at the races, dancing on the pub balcony! What a gift to a sleepless man at three o'clock in the morning!'

You can hear the whole interview with Damien [here](#), where he talks about a great deal more than *The Best of Best New Zealand Poems*. You can even compare his reading of Bob Orr's poem with the poet's own rendition on the [Best New Zealand Poems audio page](#). And you can check out The Close Readers album, *Group Hug*, [here](#).

6. Knocking up against great

It's Book Awards time again. Winners will be announced in Wellington on 27 July. [The Tuesday Poem](#) site has given a quick run-down on the poetry finalists, but if Kate Camp's astonishing new book doesn't win, we'll eat our collected villanelles. We're also backing Laurence Fearnley in fiction, especially since the Listener's Book Group picked *The Hut Builder* as their winner. 'It's knocking up against great,' said one reader; while another, the actor and director [Michael Hurst](#), said: 'The more I think about that book, the more it comes back to me. In a deeper and quieter way.'

And we're hoping that Pip Adam and Lynn Jenner, already announced as winners of the best first book awards for fiction and for poetry, have a very good night on the night.

There's more information about the awards [here](#).

7. Acuter and cuter

The art of the short essay is alive and well if Ashleigh Young's blog is anything to go by. All of her blog entries are interesting, but her latest post, on David Hill and the strange third-person phenomenon of writers' biographical notes, is a brilliant piece of writing. It starts out from a comment made by David Hill when reviewing *Sport 39* in the NZ Herald – 'Editors really must keep cuteness out of biographical notes' – (see 'Recent web reading' below) and finds its way to one of David Hill's own bio notes. Go [here](#) and marvel.

8. Science writing

If you're thinking of entering this year's Royal Society Creative Science Writing Prize, you can download a free e-copy of *Shift*, the anthology of past winners in both fiction and non-fiction categories. This year's judge is theatre maker and cross media artist Jo Randerson. Much more information [here](#).

Meantime, if you want to develop your skills in writing about the world of science, you could consider signing on for [Dave Armstrong's Continuing Education workshop](#), which consists of three linked Saturdays – 1, 8 and 15 October.

9. Writers on line

A few people we know are hanging out at [CollaboratElaborate](#)

[Anna McKenzie](#) has a website

And a [Facebook](#) page

10. The expanding bookshelf

Issue Five of [Hue & Cry](#), all 144 pages of it, was launched last week at the Memphis Belle café. It includes new writing by 2011 Best First Book winners Pip Adam and Lynn Jenner, new fiction by Eleanor Catton author of *The Rehearsal*, and Tina Makereti author of *Once Upon a Time in Aotearoa*, new poetry by Best NZ Poems 2010 awardees Bill Nelson, Sarah Jane Barnett, and David Eggleton, new art by Tahī Moore, the NZ/International art collective All The Cunning Stunts, Campbell Patterson & Daniel Munn in collaboration, Martyn Reynolds interviewing Georg Blunier from Paloma Presents, and art writing from Sriwhana Spong and Lydia Chai. Plus a heck of a lot more.

Jo Davy's co-authored book [Spooked: Exploring the Paranormal in New Zealand](#) is published on August 5th. We hear there'll be a launch at the famously haunted Inverloch House on August 12th.

Very nice to see Marama Salsano, CREW 254, turning up (twice!) in the [Pikihuia Awards shortlist](#).

Anna Jackson's new book of poetry, *Thicket*, has just been launched. Little known author factoid: Anna Jackson lives on Jackson Street!

Brian Turner's new book *Inside Outside* is just out from VUP. As Allen Curnow might have said, a big one. There are over 130 pages of poetry, but we particularly liked a tiny one-line poem. So, just in time for the next election, here is 'New Zealanders, a definition':

'Born here, buggered it up.'

11. Massey Readings

Speaking of Brian Turner, his National Poetry Day reading in Palmerston North is one of several being mounted this year by Massey University. Brian's reading is in the Palmerston North City Library from 6:30 on Friday, and followed by a Q & A. The Massey readings are shared between the university's Palmerston North, Auckland and Wellington campuses, and include presentations by Ian Wedde, Kate De Goldi, Lloyd Jones, Lynn Jenner and Selina Tusitala Marsh. More information [here](#).

12. Recent web reading

[Chris Price in Rome](#)

[Chris Price in Menton](#) (scroll down)

[Damien Wilkins in Wellington](#)

[Bill Manhire in the Tower](#)

[Ken Duncum at sea](#)

[Sunday Star-Times Short Story Awards 2011](#)

[William Shakespeare meets Rupert Murdoch](#)

[Celebrating Mervyn Peake](#)

[Harry Ricketts on Vincent O'Sullivan's new poetry collection](#)

[Altrusa's literacy quiz](#)

[The Sorry Bible](#)

'Wrong or at best misleading' – [Stephen Stratford](#) on North & South's article about NZ fiction

[Robert Browning recites](#) a bit of 'How They Brought the Good News from Ghent to Aix', then forgets the words

[Lev Grossman on fan fiction](#)

[There's a small Festival of Ideas](#) tucked inside the Christchurch Arts Festival

[The Man Alone conference](#) – a pretty interesting list of papers and presenters

[Reviews of *Sport 39* and *Landfall 221*](#)

[ScienceTeller 2011](#): 'a celebration of Storytelling and Science' – Dunedin, Nov 15-19

[Laconic women](#)

[Turbine](#) has begun reading submissions for the 2011 issue

[How William Wordsworth did it](#)

[The Joseph Brodsky/Stephen Spender Prize 2011](#)

13. Great lists of our time

A few glimpses of Hell (attributions removed)

Hell has three gates: lust, anger, and greed.

Hell is other people.

Hell is other people's music.

Hell is where the chefs are British, the mechanics French, the lovers Swiss, the police German and it's all organised by the Italians.

Hell is full of musical amateurs.

An intelligent hell would be better than a stupid paradise.

Better to reign in Hell than to serve in Heaven.

Hell is a half-filled auditorium.

Hell is where all the interesting people go.

Whatever the tortures of hell, the boredom of heaven would be even worse.

Hell is truth seen too late.

Hell is other people's memoirs.

Hell is other people's vuvuzelas/ringtones/spreadsheets/status updates.

Hell is other teenage girls.

Hell is a compilation album by Alice Cooper.

If you're going through hell, keep going.

Hell is paved with good samaritans.

Maybe hell is just having to listen to our grandparents breathe through their noses when they're eating sandwiches.

Sailors ought never to go to church. They ought to go to hell, where it is much more comfortable.

Go to Heaven for the climate, Hell for the company.

The hottest places in Hell are reserved for those who in times of great moral crisis remain neutral.

Hell isn't merely paved with good intentions, it is walled and roofed with them.

In hell there is no other punishment than to begin over and over again the tasks left unfinished in your lifetime.

Hell is what the infant must experience before he gets to us.

If there is no Hell, a good many preachers are obtaining money under false pretences.

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Supporting the IIML

The International Institute of Modern Letters was established at Victoria University in 2001 to promote and foster contemporary imaginative writing. Our founder, philanthropist Glenn Schaeffer, continues to contribute to IIML activities in a range of ways.

While not everyone is able to match Glenn's level of support, we value all those who

have helped us to foster the development of emerging writers – for example through scholarships, prizes, and grants. We would welcome the opportunity to talk with you about continuing your support for the IIML, for example through a gift in your will.

All gifts are managed by the Victoria University Foundation, a registered charitable trust established to raise funds in areas of strategic importance to the University, such as the IIML.

For further information on how you can provide philanthropic support to the IIML, please contact our Director, Bill Manhire, Ph: 04 463 6808, Email bill.manhire@vuw.ac.nz, or Diana Meads, Fundraising Manager, Victoria University of Wellington Foundation Ph: 0800 VIC LEGACY (0800 842 534), Email: diana.meads@vuw.ac.nz